

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 /050 W

----- 017817

R 261300Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 678

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS QUEBEC 0184

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CA

SUBJECT: GOQ TO ORDER STRIKING NURSES BACK TO WORK

REF: MONTREAL 929 AND PREVIOUS

1. GOQ TABLED EMERGENCY LEGISLATION EVENING 7/23 IN HASTILY-CALLED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION TO ORDER QUEBEC NURSES BACK TO WORK. LEGISLATION DESIGNED END FIVE-WEEK OLD STRIKE BY 5,500 MEMBER QUEBEC FEDERATION OF NURSES WHICH HAS PARALYSED 29 PROVINCIAL FRENCH-LANGUAGE HOSPITALS, MAINLY IN METROPOLITAN MONTREAL. ASSEMBLY RULES WERE SUSPENDED TO PERMIT ALL THREE READINGS OF BILL DURING THE SAME SITTING. HOWEVER, SESSION DRONED ON THROUGH THE NIGHT AND REACHED ONLY SECOND READING BY SATURDAY MORNING. NONETHELESS, LEGISLATION SEEMS SURE TO PASS DURING WEEKEND.

2. WHEN PASSED, LEGISLATION WILL GO INTO EFFECT ONE MINUTE PAST MIDNIGHT JULY 27. IT CARRIES FINES OF UP TO 10,000 DOLLARS FOR THE UNION AND UP TO 250 DOLLARS A DAY FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS IN EVENT NON-COMPLIANCE WITH LAW. ALL HOSPITALS ARE ORDERED BY LEGISLATION TO ORGANIZE A RETURN TO NORMAL SERVICES, AND EMPLOYEES ARE CHARGED TAKE STEPS FIND OUT THEIR WORK SCHEDULED BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK.

3. MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE TALKS HAVE BEEN STAFF MOBILITY AND WORK SCHEDULES. (REFTELS) TALKS HAVE BEEN DEADBLOCKED SINCE JUNE 18 AND NURSES HAVE IGNORED SEVERAL INJUNCTIONS DURING THAT TIME. MILITANT QUEBEC FEDERATION OF NURSES PRESIDENT GINETTE GOSSELIN SAID 7/23 THAT NURSES WILL NOT DISCUSS

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BACK-TO-WORK LEGISLATION UNTIL THEY SEE FINAL LAW. GOSSELIN

QUOTED IN PRESS AS SAYING UNION LEADERS MAY RECOMMEND MEMBERS
RESIGN EN MASSE RATHER THAN BEING FORCED BACK TO WORK.

4. COMMENT: GOVT. FINALLY FORCE TAKE EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES
BECAUSE "WALKOUTS BY THE FEDERATION WERE ENDANGERING HEALTH
AND LIVES IN THE PROVINCES." PUBLIC PRESSURE TO FORCE NURSES
BACK TO WORK HAS BEEN BUILDING AS MAJORITY OF AFFECTED HOSPI-
TALS WERE NOT MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL SERVICES. PREMIER BOURASSA
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER CLAUDE FORGET ARE AWARE THAT PREVIOUS
BACK-TO-WORK LEGISLATION THIS YEAR IN OTHER FIELDS HAS SIMPLY
POSPONED PROBLEMS AND HARMED GOVERNMENTS POLITICAL IMAGE.
BOURASSA HIMSELF INTERVENED IN DISPUTE LAST WEEK BUT FAILED TO
REACH SETTLEMENT WITH TOUGH LADY NEGOTIATORS. DESPITE
GENEROUS OFFERS, NURSES REMAINED ADEMANT AND GOQ FORCE RESORT
TO UNDIGNIFIED DRACONIAN MEASURES. LAW NOT ONLY COMES LATER
THAN EXPECTED BY MANY BUT FAILS TO INCLUDE TOUGH LOSS OF ACCRE-
DITATION BY NURSES, WORDING WHICH MANY HAD EXPECTED. GOQ
OBVIOUSLY STRUGGLING FIND RIGHT COMBINATION OF CARROT AND STICK
CONJOLE NURSES BACK TO WORK. EVEN IF THEY SUCCEED, HOSPITAL AD-
MINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE BE PLAGUED BY OVER 1,000 STRIKING
TECHNICIANS NOT COVERED BY LEGISLATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, NURSES, LEGISLATIVE BILLS, LABOR STRIKES, FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976QUEBEC00184
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760286-1106
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760721/aaaaasok.tel
Line Count: 82
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MONTREAL 929
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hackerp0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 MAR 2004 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <06 JAN 2005 by hackerp0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOQ TO ORDER STRIKING NURSES BACK TO WORK
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006